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*International Master of Science in Social Work*

# Saving the Young; Social workers' Perception of Juvenile Crime Prevention in Sweden



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## **Abstract**

Topic: Saving the Young; Social worker's Perception of Juvenile Crime Prevention in Sweden

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This study sought to explore the juvenile crime prevention in Sweden which for the purpose of this report is seen as efforts towards preventing youth criminality and all forms of anti social behaviour by young people.

In the study, interviews with six social workers working directly or indirectly with young offenders were conducted. The interview results were analyzed and subjected to transnational comparison with the practice in Kenya. The report explores existing literature on situational crime prevention, restorative justice, the link between drugs and crime, attachment to parents, peers and involvement in convectional activities, gender differences in criminality, partnerships in crime prevention and the juvenile justice system. It uses control, strain, feminist and social disorganization theories to explain the causes of delinquency, analyzes the perceptions of social workers and discusses what works in juvenile crime prevention.

The report identifies the causes of delinquency in Kenya and in Sweden as well as the prevention programs that social workers perceive as effective in addressing youth crime. The key finding of this report is that social workers feel that a lot can be done to improve the juvenile justice system in Sweden. They feel that the system is not working properly and they identify societal strain, conflicting laws, lack of proper integration for immigrant youths and drug abuse as among obstacles to juvenile justice

Key Words; crime prevention, juvenile offender, Kenya, Sweden

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“If poverty is the mother of crime, lack of sense is its father” (Hirschi, 1969/2006)

Juvenile delinquency is law breaking by young people and as a social problem it takes different meanings both to an individual and to the society. Thus, different countries have different approaches as regards prevention, treatment, public attitude, legislative control and administrative practices. The legal distinction between adult crime and juvenile delinquency stems from the belief that juveniles are immature and in need of nurturance and protection, (Stafford, 2004). According to Swedish law, no legal sanctions can be imposed for acts committed by persons under age 15. Between 15 and 17, a young person may not, except under special circumstances, be sentenced to prison but must be referred to the institutional care facilities of the social welfare authorities, Janson (2004). Estrada and Sarnecki (2004:3) observe that “the English concept ‘juvenile delinquency’ has no direct equivalent in the Swedish legal system. Instead, in Sweden we usually speak of juvenile criminality, a concept which differs from juvenile delinquency in that it does not include so-called status offences i.e. acts committed by juveniles which constitute a crime but are legal if they are committed by adults”. Janson (2004:414) observes that “It takes some ingenuity to identify a status offence in the Swedish justice system. Several activities are prohibited for minors and underage persons, but have no legal sanctions against the young perpetrators, so this acts are not offenses”. He gives the examples that a minor sneaking to watch an adult movie or having sexual intercourse may concern social authorities but no legal sanctions can be made. Youths ages 15 or older are tried in the adult criminal justice system, although youthfulness is an important mitigating factor in sentencing, (Feld, 1994).



In Kenya, as is the case in most common wealth countries, status offences (a delinquency or crime that can only be committed by people occupying a particular status for example offences of school truancy, vagrancy, sexual immorality and violations of liquor laws) are punishable in a court of law. The law also provides for the establishment of a children's court that has jurisdiction to hear and determine all matter relating to young people below the age of 18 years. The age of criminal responsibility in Kenya is eight years<sup>1</sup>. The law provides that the decisions of the juvenile court shall be for the best interest of the young person. In most cases, such young people are sent for care which range from being remanded in a children's home, a young offender's institution to a youth prison. The different practices in different countries are best summarized by Rubin (1991) who argues that juvenile delinquency is a legal and sociological concept, not psychological. It is what the law says it is.

Farrington et al (2002) identifies seven situational settings under which juvenile prevention programs can be implemented, these are; families, schools, communities, labor markets, places, police agencies and courts and corrections. Delinquency often starts at home and is manifested by disobedience, absence from home, loitering, immoral conduct yet parents are responsible for the quality of life at home, it therefore follows that the problem could be attributable to parental failure. The problem is later manifested by truancy in school, taking drugs, bullying and associating with peers of questionable conduct. It follows that schools provide a good arena to address the problem of delinquency.

Crime prevention takes different forms aimed at reducing criminality. However, some approaches may achieve little if any positive change within the target

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/pon97/p56a.htm> Accessed on 10th May 2008

group. It is thus generally accepted that crime prevention is defined not by its intentions but by its consequences, (Farrington et. al.). Different measures may be aimed at reforming or deterring the offender or protecting individuals or the community. Hughes (1998:18) argues "All correctional ideologies can be legitimized by the rhetoric of prevention, ranging from ideologies of incapacitation, deterrence and retribution to those of restitution, reparation and rehabilitation right through those of diversion, decriminalization and finally abolition. According to Kühlhorn and Svensson (1982:10) "Crime prevention measures are technical, informative and educational methods aimed at preventing criminal acts and effected in a way that allows an evaluation of the extent to which the aim is achieved". Crime prevention programs are initiated depending on how criminality is perceived. By studying the criminal prevention approaches, it is possible to know what is perceived to be the risk factors since most programs seek to address these risk factors.

### **1.1 Problem Area**

I, the author, previously worked as a probation officer in Kenya and was specifically tasked with rehabilitation of youthful offenders. I observed a high rate of recidivism among juveniles and noted the absence of prevention programs that addresses the root cause of behaviour problems among young people.

In the Kenyan society, as elsewhere in the African culture, the family plays a big role in nurturing a young person to be a responsible and respectable individual in the community. However, as the fabric holding the society together wears down due to many social problems like inequalities, poverty, HIV/AIDS and drugs abuse the young person falls through the protective safety net in the name of a caring community. The result is a high prevalence of youth criminality which

coupled with a resource constrained juvenile justice administration process, creates a situation where youths engage in criminality. In addressing the problem of youth criminality, Kenyan authorities have put a lot of emphasis on punishment which is only one of the many tools of crime prevention.

Recently, I was attached to Ung och Trygg i Göteborg for my fieldwork as part fulfillment of my Masters degree. This organization brings together agencies working in the area of juvenile crime prevention in Göteborg, Sweden. During my field practice, I noted that in Sweden crime prevention strategies involves institutions of families, schools, labour markets, police, and social services. It was my observation that restorative justice is gaining popularity and also working with victims of crime. Further, I observed the measures taken in the society aimed at reducing opportunities for crime and increased risk of detection through surveillance as well as efforts to rid society of illegal drugs.

This study will examine these crime prevention programs with particular attention as to how they reduce youth criminality. It will mainly focus on social crime prevention which is geared chiefly on changing social environments and the motivation of offenders as opposed to situational crime prevention which involves reducing opportunities for criminality although the latter will also be explored to understand why Sweden compared to Kenya is successful in curbing criminality among young people.

## **1.2 Aim of the Study**

The aim of the study is to understand the juvenile crime prevention programs available in Sweden and to get the perception of social workers as regards the effectiveness of these programs while comparing them with the practice in Kenya.

## **1.3 Objectives**

1. To understand the juvenile justice system in Sweden
2. To find out the dominant perspectives/theories that social workers use to explain juvenile delinquency
3. To describe the various juvenile crime prevention programs employed by social workers
4. To get the views of the social workers as regards the effectiveness of these prevention programs

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the key predictors of juvenile delinquency in Sweden?
2. What juvenile delinquency prevention measures are available to youths in Sweden?
3. What are the perceptions of social workers on the crime prevention programs they are involved in? What works and what do not?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Crime is one of the social problems confronting social workers. Young offenders make a significant percent of criminals; they require special attention since they are immature, have a potentially long life ahead of them and are easier to reform than adults. From this point of departure, any efforts aimed at addressing juvenile delinquency from the onset can effectively reduce crime in society. It is the author's hope that by studying the practices in Sweden, the findings can offer a platform for fruitful discussions around issues of crime prevention.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **EARLIER RESEARCH**

In this chapter I explore the various crime prevention strategies that are common in Sweden and the developed world but are yet to be fully embraced in the Kenyan context. I examine what research has shown as regards their effectiveness in creating safety within communities and neighbourhoods. These measures are; situational crime prevention, the restorative justice approach, eliminating drug abuse and the partnership approach.

#### **2.1 Situational Crime Prevention**

This form of crime prevention entails measures directed at specific forms of crime, involving the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in which these crimes occur so as to reduce the opportunities for these crimes as perceived by a broad range of potential offenders (Crawford, 1998). The idea of situational approach to crime prevention can be traced to the work of the British Home Office in the 70's. A series of projects were undertaken aimed at reducing factors specific to different crimes, places and situations (Lab, 2004). Reducing opportunities include making the targets of crime harder to get by introducing physical barriers to protect property, increasing the risk of detection by introducing surveillance through CCTV (Closed-camera television) and reducing the rewards of crime by increasing the likelihood of detection.

Several studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of situational crime prevention; key among them is the research on the transit systems which face problems of riders who want to evade paying the fare. Van Andel as quoted in Lab (2004) found out that fare evasion on buses occurred due to the ability of riders to enter and exit the buses through the rear door, thus avoiding the driver. A change of procedure that required passengers to enter the bus near the driver and prove payment led to fare evasion falling significantly.

Mayhew et. al as quoted by Crawford (1998) evaluated the results of motor cycle helmet registration in West Germany, the Netherlands and England. They argued that motor cycle theft had gone down considerably after the law requiring riders to wear helmets. The argument is that opportunistic thieves

would be deterred from committing the less serious but more obvious offence of riding a motorcycle without a helmet and possibly be suspected of stealing the motor cycle. However, there was a noted increase of car and bicycle theft over the period under evaluation. They conclude that 'opportunity-reducing measures are not inevitably undermined by displacement' (Crawford 1998:87)

Another example is the street lighting project in London that was evaluated by Painter as quoted in Crawford (1998:92). She claimed that incidents of crime fell by 75% in the six week period after the lighting improvements were installed. She argued that 'improved street lighting had a number of positive effects including encouraging people to use the streets, reviving public spaces, encouraging informal surveillance by pedestrians and increasing the likelihood of victims or witnesses identifying offenders'. Other studies have found no evidence that could be found to support the argument that lighting reduces crime.

In his critical assessment of situational strategies to crime prevention, Crawford, (1998) argues that one implication is over prioritizing property crimes in public places. The measures are harder to implement in private domains where much violence takes place, they address symptoms and not causes thereby not explaining why people commit crime, the measures are only temporary, crime moves elsewhere through displacement, is highly intrusive, technology may become redundant or the unintended outcomes like offenders using the technology to prey their victims. Crime prevention has other dimensions like social, cultural and ethical not just the physical dimension. Besides, preventing crime this way restricts social relations as CCTV, alarms, locks and guards serve as a constant reminder of how vulnerable we are to crime.

## **2.2 Restorative Justice**

In Sweden, as elsewhere, restorative justice as a crime prevention measure has emerged and is gaining wide appreciation among those working in the area of crime prevention. It seeks to bring the victim and offender together to 'heal the wounds' that resulted from the criminal act. Lab (2004:278), notes that the shift in restorative justice is to make the victim a key actor in addressing the criminal act, "An underlying assumption that the offender can benefit or be 'repaired' by participating in the restorative process". An example of the restorative justice approach is victim offender mediation.

"Victim-offender mediation in Sweden is regulated by the Mediation Act (Medlingslagen 2002:445), which came into effect on July 1st 2002. The Act, which focuses primarily on young offenders, constitutes a piece of framework legislation and covers mediation organised by the state or by local authorities. According to the Act, the offence must first have been reported to the police, and the offender must have acknowledged his or her guilt before mediation can be initiated. Participation in mediation is always voluntary for both parties. This is a necessary condition for a successful mediation meeting. Mediation does not constitute a penal sanction or an alternative to the regular justice system, but rather plays a complementary role. It is however possible for the prosecutor to take the fact that mediation has taken place into consideration in relation to the prosecution of young offenders" Wahlin (2006)

Restorative justice process sees crime as harm done to persons, it violates interpersonal relationships and justice must seek to restore the broken relationships. In Sweden, there is no restorative justice intervention in the young offenders' institutions (YOI's). Research has been conducted into the suitability of restorative justice approaches in YOI's. Belgium is one of the European countries which have made remarkable achievements in this area. In one prison, there has been the establishment of a victim offender mediation project with financial compensation where prisoners earn money which is paid to their victims. (William, 2004)

South Africa's Child bill can be regarded as a pioneer in restorative justice in Africa, it is founded on the same principles as the truth, justice and reconciliation commission following apartheid. It is guided by the African philosophy of 'ubuntu', which is linked to the idea of forgiveness. The bill defines restorative justice as promoting reconciliation, restitution and responsibility through involvement of a child, a child's parent, family members, victims and communities. According to Skelton (2002), the bill includes alternatives for arrest and diversion programmes like victim offender mediation, family group conferences but still leaves room for other approaches that may be developed.

### **2.3 Drugs and Crime Prevention**

Drug use is one of the means of predicting or identifying potential problems in society. Targeting those involved in drugs may serve to alleviate the problem of



crime (Lab, 2004: 211). Whereas there is a strong correlation between drugs and crime, the extent to which drugs cause crime and vice versa is unclear since the relationship is complex. Since drug use causes criminality to some extent, then drug prevention and treatment programs could serve to curb crime.

Sweden has been hailed for its restrictive drug policy which aims at a drug free society. The levels of drug use in Sweden (0.44% of the population aged 15-64) are slightly below the EU average, (UNODC 2007). Mackenzie (2000:467) reviewed what is promising in crime prevention and noted that drug courts combining both rehabilitation and criminal justice control was a promising strategy.

Lab (2004:228) notes that prevention programs that aim to keep individuals from initially using drugs usually target juveniles since it is during adolescence that most people experiment with drugs, such strategies involves giving information about drugs, building self esteem, handling peer pressure and learning to make choices. Studies on prevention program like D.A.R.E- Drug Abuse Resistance Education and L.S.T- Life Skill Training provide mixed results. Generally, they are good at increasing young peoples' knowledge but do not prevent them from becoming curious and experimenting. The programs have been hailed for being minimally intrusive and for their ability to bring police and juveniles together in a non threatening situation providing a great deal of appeal, Lab (2004:230).

## **2.4 Partnerships**

In the developed countries, a partnership approach is one of the recent developments to crime prevention. "Crime prevention and community safety lie beyond the competence of any one single agency. Crime by its nature is multi faceted, both in its causes and effects. And yet the social response to crime is segmented and compartmentalized ... a partnership approach allows the coordination of expertise and the pouring of information as resources" (Crawford 1998: 170).

In Sweden, a good example is "Ung och Trygg" i Göteborg, An initiative started in 2004 that brings together the departments of social services and education, the police, prosecutors and the public housing company. It is a coordinating agency that seeks to bring together those working in the area of juvenile crime prevention. The organization is run by a coordinating team that comprise

individuals from diverse backgrounds such as school, non government organization, housing company, youth out research and so on. Gilling as quoted by Crawford (1998:178) suggests that professional backgrounds of these working in multi agency crime prevention may be an important influence in conceptions of what crime is about and the type of schemes prioritized.

Crawford (1998:171) has pointed out that conflicts of ideologies tend to emerge in efforts to bring different agencies to work together, that certain agencies tend to dominate the policy agenda. Ung och Trygg can be seen as a form of multi-agency cooperation where various agencies come together without this significantly affecting or transforming the work they do. The team is tasked with the duty of bringing stakeholders around problematic areas involving young people to discuss solutions. They use modern methods like future workshops and open space in the meetings.

Ung och trygg is a project that has an estimated lifespan, the employees are on a contract and it is envisaged that work will be completed at an unstated future date. Tilley as quoted by Crawford (1998:179) points to the danger of running a coordinating agency as a project where other successive ways have to be found once the project comes to an end.

## **Summary**

This chapter has reviewed existing literature on certain crime prevention strategies, as it has been seen; situational crime strategies do not always work, are short lived and have a problem of displacement. Restorative justice seeks to repair damage that crime does to relationships and an effective way of reducing reoffending. Focusing on drugs is successful to the extent that it provides information to young people but does not prevent them from experimenting. Partnerships arise out of the necessity of involving others groups in the community in reducing criminality. However, problems of conflicts of ideology often emerge since the organizations have different mandates and such conflicts are likely to slow down the partnership's progress. The crime prevention methods reviewed in this chapter represents what the author choose to refer to as an emerging trend or a paradigm shift in most of the western world and which other developing countries need to embrace in order to effectively

save the young. The next chapter will try to situate these strategies within a wider theoretical framework.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A number of theories have been developed to explain criminality and delinquency. These theories include biogenetic, rational choice, psychoanalytic, learning, labeling, conflict, social disorganization, strain, feminist and social control theories. In providing a transnational perspective, I find the last four theories very relevant and for that reason I have chosen to explore them further for sake of this study. There are far too many theories that describe criminality. Bernard in Farrington (2005:9) argued that criminology had failed to make scientific progress because no criminology theory has even been falsified; all that happens over time is that new theories are added. The theories explored here have at their core the element of control and although they are distinct theories explaining criminality, they tend to overlap to a certain extent. Thus, feminist theories argue that women are more controlled than men; social disorganization argues that individuals lose networks that acted as forms of control while strain results into criminality when the individual lacks social emotional control.

#### **3.1 Control Theories**

Social Control theories are sociologically rooted; they look at the social processes and social organizational arrangements to help explain crime and deviance. Most control theories assume that people are socialized into conventional behaviour from an early age but something breaks or weakens the bonds to convection and frees a person to deviate (Henry and Lanier 2006:109). The breaking of the bond can be as a result of isolation and social disorganization. It can also be a failure to bond due to parental failure especially the inability to provide a secure attachment required for satisfaction of childhood needs of emotional and physical security. "Control theory assumes that the bond of affection for convectional persons is a major deterrent to crime. The stronger this bond is, the more likely the person is to take it into account when and if he contemplates a criminal act" (Hirschi, 2006:83). There is a link between attachment and the adequacy of socialization, the internalization of norms. The emotional bond between the parent and the child

presumably provides the bridge across which parental ideas and expectations pass.

In a self reported study of the link between delinquency and attachment to parents, Hirschi (2006:86-90) argues that the more the child is accustomed to sharing his mental life with his parents, the more he is accustomed to seeking or getting their opinion about his activities, the more he is to perceive them as part of his social and psychological field, the less likely he would be to neglect their opinion when considering an act contrary to law. In a related study, he found out that intimacy of communication between child and parent is strongly related to the commission of delinquent acts. Those who spend much time talking with their parents are only slightly less likely than those who spend little time talking with their parents to have committed delinquent acts. Hirschi (Ibid: 94) concludes that, "the closer the child's relations with his parents, the more he is attached to and identifies with them, the lower his chances of delinquency...the more strongly a child is attached to his parents, the more he is bound by their expectations and therefore the more strongly he is bound to conformity with the legal norms of the larger system"

Nye as cited in Henry and Lanier (2006) identifies four kinds of controls. Direct control relying on punishment and rewards to gain compliance, indirect control relying on appeals to effective attachment and emotional investments in social relationship, internalized control relying on gradually changing people's beliefs or impulses through socialization, conditioning, persuasion or brainwashing and opportunity control relying on manipulating the behavioural alternatives from which people can choose in fulfilling their needs. "Direct control reduces the likelihood of delinquency through the consistent sanctioning of delinquent acts and acts conducive to delinquency like associating with delinquent peers" Britt and Gottfredson (2003:56)

Research had been conducted into the effectiveness of direct versus indirect forms of control. Popular opinion favours direct control and is seen to echo the universally quoted adage 'sparing the rod will spoil the child. Hirschi (2006:120) argue that utility of direct controls is limited among adolescents, especially older ones since they are hard to monitor behaviour and they are more involved with peers. Research also indicates the causal connection between parental control and delinquency may be reciprocal. Children are increasingly being viewed not

only as a product of their parents but also as having an effect on their parent behaviour (Gecas and Seff as cited in Henry and Lanier, 2006). Children who are delinquent may cause their parents to either be tough on them or give up on them.

Involvement in convectional activities is part of control theory. "Many persons undoubtedly owe a life of virtue to a lack of opportunity to do otherwise. Time and energy are inherently limited" Hirschi (2006:21). The assumption is that a person may be too busy doing convectional things to find time to engage in deviant behaviour. This reasoning is responsible for the stress placed on providing youths with recreational facilities. Sutherland in (Ibid: 22) notes "in the general area of juvenile delinquency it is probable that the most significant difference between juveniles who engage in delinquency and those who do not is that the latter are provided abundant opportunities of a convectional type for satisfying their recreational interests, while the former lack those opportunities or facilities"

Control theories of crime start with the assumption of value consensus, or that all human societies prohibit acts of force and fraud undertaken in the pursuit of self interest. The assumption is consistent with the control theory assumption that humans are by nature self interested and unconcerned with the consequences of their actions for others. In order to function, social groups must have some mechanism for controlling the self – interested tendencies of their members. These mechanisms include the formal actions of the state to sanction offenders, informal ones such as parental control and socialization of children, and our tendencies to control each other's behaviour in both overt and subtle ways (Britt & Gottfredson, 2003:87). The cause of criminal, delinquent and disruptive behaviour in the control theory perspective is simply individuals acting on their natural tendencies because of a failure in some respect of social control.

As children grow older, the internalized sense of self-control becomes the dominant restraint on their behaviour, largely replacing direct parental control. Delinquents lack self control because of ineffective child rearing practices in the early years where the trait of self control is being developed. Strong direct controls exerted by parents later in adolescence cannot compensate for or correct weaker self control acquired in the early formative period. Henry and Lanier (2006)

### 3.2 Feministic theory of Criminology

Giddens (1997:190) argues that criminological studies have traditionally ignored half the population. Many textbooks in criminology still include virtually nothing about women, save for sections on rape and prostitution. It is also noted that the most common complaint about existing theories of crime is that they were developed and largely tested by men with male offenders in mind (Britt and Gottfredson, 2003). Statistics show enormous imbalance in ratio of men to women in most countries. In Britain, women take up only 3% of the British prison population (Giddens 1997: 192). Flower as cited in (Giddens, 1997) notes contrast between the types of crime men and women commit. Women rarely commit offences involving violence and are almost all small scale like shop lifting, drunkenness and prostitution. Only one in six of all known young offenders is a young woman. In general their crimes are also less serious, with theft and handling stolen goods by far the most common.

Farrington in Muncie (2004:31) contends that those factors that are known to protect young people against offending include having a resilient temperament, an affectionate relationship with at least one parent, parents who provide effective and consistent discipline and maintain a strong interest in their children's education. However, one of the strongest predictors of non-offending seems to be that of gender. Giddens observes that crime is gendered, while there are a few girls' gangs, the high levels of crime found in poorer areas of the cities are associated particularly with the activities of young men. Why should so many young men in these areas turn to crime? Boys are often part of gangs from an early age, a subculture in which some forms of crime are a way of life. And once gang members are labeled as criminals by the authorities, they embark on regular criminal activities. In spite of the existence today of girls gangs, such subcultures are fundamentally masculine and infused with the male values of adventure, excitement and comradeship, (Giddens, 1997: 195)

Naffine as cited in Britt & Gottfredson (2003:77) notes that control theory is particularly well suited to explain the greater conformity of women and girls relative to men and boys given its focus on explaining conformity rather than crime. Drawing on Risman's argument as cited in (Ibid: 77-78) that gender inequality is created and maintained on the individual, interactional and structural levels, Costello and Mederer in (Ibid: 80) hold that females are more

constrained than males through gender socialization, through the communication of gender expectation in interaction with others, and through institutional barriers to gender equality such as occupational segregation and inequality in the household division of labour. They argue that males and females are by nature equally inclined to commit criminal acts but females are more constrained than males in virtually all aspects of life. Thus males are freer to deviate than females. They conclude that the most fruitful approach to gender equality in crime and other aspects of social life is not to focus on increasing the freedoms accorded to women, but rather decreasing the freedoms accorded to men.

Hagan et al as cited in (Ibid: 82) argue that the relative positions of husbands and wives in the class structure will influence children's socialization. Households that are more egalitarian will produce fewer gender differences in delinquency because both girls and boys are encouraged to be more risk-taking. Households that are more patriarchal, in contrast, will foster risk taking mainly in boys and place greater controls on girls' behaviour.

Studies on individuals' gender orientation and its relation to crime have been criticized. As Adler as quoted in (Ibid: 86) argues, "Women's increased labour participation has not led them to 'desert those kitchens' and take on the traditional roles of men. Rather, in many ways women's and girls' lives have remained unchanged over the past fifty years, and in some ways women are ever more constrained than they ever were"

Costello and Mederer in (Ibid: 88) remain consistent with the assumptions in control theory that men and women have exactly the same innate tendencies, to pursue self-interest without regard to the interest of others. They also assume that it is not possible to form or maintain human societies unless individuals and ultimately society as a whole limit individual pursuit of self interest. Given these assumptions, they pose the question "why do men commit so much crime?" Their answer is that women are more effectively controlled than men are through their early socialization, through the interaction with others and through the operation of social institutions. This control over women has the positive outcome of reducing female crime.

They tie women's oppression to the biological difference between men and women which is women's ability to bear and nurse children. As Firestone in (Ibid:



90) argues, contraceptives were unavailable in much of human history and therefore the high birth rates. Due to biological necessity, women were the primary caretakers of infants. This set limits on their physical mobility, kept them in or near home. The authors pose the question "why have women been willing to allow this arrangement to continue once it was no longer a biological necessity? The answer is that the social definition of the feminine gender has come to be intimately associated with the care of children and more generally, a selfless concern for the well being of others and a self controlled focus on potential long-term consequences of their own and others' behaviour. In short, femininity is having strong bonds to family and community and having self control. Their core argument is that women and girls are more socially controlled and more self controlled than men and boys, and these differences in control explain the gender gap in criminal behaviour.

In Risman's terms as cited in (Ibid: 2003), socialization practices produce differences in males' and females' 'gendered selves' so that they develop different preferences, attitudes and behaviours. Gendered expectations for behaviours are reinforced in our interaction with others, so that others' reaction to our behaviour lead us to 'do gender' where people come to be required to be accountable for every action they perform to be appropriate to one's sex category and acting in ways consistent with the expectations. The institutional arrangements in our society provides further reinforcement for traditional behaviour and acts as barriers to both men's ability to behave in ways consistent with traditional gender expectations.

There is evidence that girls are more emphatic than boys, likely to apologize after wronging someone, experience more guilt and shame than boys do, are more concerned about others' reactions, express a low desire for risk taking, adult's efforts to produce pro social emotions and behaviours among girls are to a large extent successful (Britt & Gottfredson, 2003). Heimer in Britt & Gottfredson (2003), argues that girls are likely to be more affected by the opinion of others than boys are, and thus the relationship between anticipated disapproval of others and delinquency will be stronger for girls than for boys.

Keenan and Shaw in Farrington (2005) suggest that girls are easier to socialize and the resulting differences in socialization help create sex differences in conduct problems. They argue that girls show higher levels of empathy and guilt

than boys from toddlerhood through adolescence. Lahey and Waldman in Farrington (2005) argue that from an early age, boys are less pro social. They note that there is some evidence that there could be more fundamental sex in genetic and environmental influences on conduct problems. Eley et. al. in Farrington (2005:35) conducted studies that showed that genetic and environmental influences are similar for girls and boys, but are more distinct on developmentally – late conduct problems.

### **3.3 Social Disorganization Theory**

In the classic work of the Chicago school of urban sociology in the early twentieth century, it was thought that population density, low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity and residential instability led to the rapture of local social ties, a form of social disorganization that in turn accounted for high rates of crime and disorder (Kornhauser cited in Henry and Lanier, 2006). Social disorganization is defined as an inability of community members to achieve shared values or to solve jointly experienced problems (Bursik in Osgood and Chambers, 2003).

Current versions of social disorganization theory assume that strong networks of social relationships prevent crime and delinquency. When most community or neighborhood members are acquainted and on good terms with one another, a substantial portion of the adult population has the potential to influence each child. The larger the network of acquaintances, the greater the community's capacity for informal surveillance (because residents are easily distinguished from outsiders), for supervision (because acquaintances are willing to intervene when children and juveniles behave unacceptably), and for shaping children's values and interests. According to the current theory, community characteristics such as poverty and ethnic diversity lead to higher delinquency rates because they interfere with community members' abilities to work together (Osgood and Chambers, 2003).

More recently, the intellectual tradition of community-level research has been revitalized by the increasing popular idea of 'social capital' that Putman in Henry and Lanier (2006) defines as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Sampson in (Ibid: 2006) argues that neighbourhoods lacking social capital especially of dense social networks are less able to realize common values and therefore cannot maintain

the social controls that foster safety. Social Disorganization theory could be viewed as a micro level variant of social control theory; it considers the criminogenic implications of loosened geographical and cultural ties. The researchers at the Chicago school saw the zone of transition as a place peopled by groups that were losing the social norms of their culture of origin but had yet to take on those of their new culture. Thus norms of behaviour were in a state of flux and this resulted in social disorganization (Shafteoe, 2004).

The concept of social disorganization does not have to be a geographically rooted phenomena; it can also be a result of familial, cultural or religious changes. The combination of loosening extended family networks, cultural rejection and religious abandonment have undoubtedly led to a new generation of people from all ethnic groups feeling isolated and alienated from main stream social organizations and structures, which may make them feel less concerned about contravening laws which have been set up to protect the interests of the society and networks from which they are excluded (Shafteoe, 2004:59). The author goes on and gives the example of the two ethnic groups in Britain that are least likely to feature in offender statistics (people of Asian Indian or Chinese descent), who have clung most tightly to their cultural, religious and familial antecedents.

The belief that a neighbourhood is a social unit and should possess intimate relations has been portrayed as false by Sampson in Waring and Weisburd (2002:99), he observes that "at the macro level, one might even have an active and shared willingness to intervene among complete strangers. Consider, Sweden as a society. There are strong norms about public behaviour-drunk driving, hitting children, littering and so on. Public expectations about responding to such acts lead to high social control, regardless of personal ties among potential participants. The nature of social ties and its relationship to social control is thus empirically variable". In terms of crime prevention, this theory supports the importance of facilitating stable, integrated and socially cohesive communities.

### **3.4 General Strain theory**

This theory argues that certain stressors like failure to achieve positively valued goals, loss of positively valued stimuli and presentation of negatively valued stimuli increase the likelihood of crime. These stressors make people feel bad

and crime is a means to reduce strains, seek revenge, or make oneself feel better. Not all strained individuals engage in crime, individuals are likely to engage in crime if they are unable to engage in legal coping, when the costs of crime are low for them, and when they have a disposition toward crime (Agnew in Henry and Lanier, 2006:155)

The theory argues that the primary reason strains lead to crime is that they contribute to a range of negative emotions, such as anger and frustration. These emotions create pressure for corrective action, and they may also reduce the ability of individuals to cope in a legal manner, reduce concern for the costs of crime and increase the individual's disposition for crime. Anger reduces the ability of people to reason with others; reduce awareness of, and concern for, the costs of crime, fosters the belief that crime is justified and creates a desire for revenge. (Ibid: 157)

Although certain strains increase the likelihood of crime, most people do not cope with strains through crime. The theory devotes much attention to factors that influence the likelihood of criminal coping when they lack the ability to cope in a legal or constructive manner, when they perceive the costs of crime as low, when they are disposed to criminal behaviour patterns. These factors, in turn, are said to be influenced by coping skills and resources (e.g. intelligence, social and problem-solving skills, levels of self control); level of convectional social support (i.e. the extent to which others like parents and teachers help them); level of social control (i.e. the extent to which others monitor their behaviour and consistently sanction them for crime, their ties to the convectional others, their education and job status, and their beliefs regarding crime); and their association with criminal others (who model criminal behaviour, reinforce crime patters and teach belief favourable to crime) (Ibid).

Strain theory was developed as a social-psychological theory in that it tries to explain individual differences in offending through individual characteristics and the immediate social environment of offenders (family, school, peer and work environments). This does not mean that the larger environment is not important, indeed recent work on this theory has begun to take a greater account of the larger environment by arguing that that this affects the likelihood that certain categories of people will experience strains conducive to criminal behaviour and that they will cope with these strains through crime. In particular, it has been

argued that adolescent, lower-class males who are members of certain racial and ethnic groups and are resident in economically deprived communities are more likely to experience strain conducive to crime and are more likely to cope with them through crime (Ibid).

According to Shaftoe (2004:60), strain occurs when you are told that certain material possession and conditions are required to achieve happiness and high status, yet you are denied the legitimate means to acquire them. The popular media and in particular the advertising industry puts huge social strain on people with low incomes. Social strain is tied to economic inequality and the prevailing social values. Nations and cultures that equate success and happiness with material wealth and conspicuous consumption, yet simultaneously drive a deepening chasm between rich and poor, inevitably run risks. Some members of the disaffected poor will use any means possible to bridge that chasm, leading to conflict.

Strain theory has implications for crime control policy. Consequent to this theory, anything that reduces inequalities of opportunity, and enables all people to acquire their desired status by legitimate means should reduce the overall amount of criminal behaviour. Thus, inclusive education, training and employment policies as well as income redistribution programmes should reduce the amount of social strain. Equally, giving people from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to achieve legitimate status (e.g. through systems which promote cooperatives, peer education and community leadership) should prevent many of them from seeking status through anti social means. At the policy level, efforts should be made to change people's beliefs that wealth accumulation will automatically lead to happiness. Shaftoe (2004)

## **Summary**

These different theories try to answer the question "Why do individuals commit crimes?" Social control theories see the individual as free to engage in crime because of weak attachment to conventional others and institutions. Feminist theories argue that women are more constrained than men through socialization and that the gender differences in criminality are brought about by differential family system particularly whether family system is patriarchal or egalitarian. Social disorganization theory specifies that several variables like residential instability, ethnic diversity, family disruption, economic status,

population size influence a community's capacity to develop and maintain strong systems of social relationships. Lastly, general strain theory argues that people are pressured into crime by the negative emotions that results from strains. They feel bad and these bad feelings create some pressure to act, with crime being one possible response

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODS**

This study is qualitative in that it is more interested in the depth of the data rather than breadth which requires the researcher to play an active role in the data collection. Specifically, qualitative interviews were used which although their great value lies in flexibility and openness, it was important for the researcher to think through the process and provide the basic structure and framework to make the study useful and worthwhile. This study followed Kvale's (1996) seven stages in designing and implementing an interview study. These are thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting. In this chapter, choice, sampling and data collection methods are outlined, method of analysis and issues of validity, reliability and generalizability discussed as well as the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

#### **4.1 Motivation for Choice of method**

Seale (1998:202) observes that the interview is probably the most commonly used method in social research. It is more economical than other methods since the interviewee can report on a wide range of situations that he or she has observed, so acting as the eyes of the researcher. Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations." On the other hand, they have been criticized for being subjective and time consuming. As the title of this report suggests, I sought the perceptions of social workers working with juveniles; their intuitive judgments, their feelings and attitudes towards the crime prevention strategies that they utilize. Such are things that cannot be seen or heard and the interview becomes the only possible tool of inquiry. According to Kvale (1996),

Interviews allow people to convey to others a situation from their own perspective and in their own words. Research interviews are based on the conversations of everyday life. They are conversations with structure and purpose that are defined and controlled by the researcher.

When characterizing interviews, May (2001:121) notes that we do it along a quantitative – qualitative dimension moving from formal standardized (example surveys) to unstructured (example in depth interviews). My approach was the semi structured interview, in which case the questions were specified but allowed for probing beyond the answers. The argument for this approach is that it makes it possible to compare results from different interviewees especially where the researcher has a particular focus on certain themes.

## **4.2 Sampling Methodology**

In this study, the population refers to the social workers working with young offenders in Gothenburg upon which a sample was drawn. Gilbert (2001:62) notes that “although researches usually seek a representative sample, they only have sufficient resources to study a small number of people” He further argues that where the researcher’s aim is to generate a theory and a wider understanding of social processes and social action, the representativeness of the sample may be of less importance and the best sampling strategy is often focused or judgmental sampling.

The sampling of the respondents was non-random, according to Seale (1998:138), “it is not always practical to randomly sample from a population. In some circumstances it might not be desirable either”. This research utilized a method called theoretical sampling that was developed by Glaser and Strauss (see Seale 1998:139 and Gilbert (2001:64). In this method, representativeness of the sample is not important , respondents should be chosen depending on how



much they will maximize theoretical development. This method is also known as purposive sampling methodology where respondents who are willing and will potentially give a lot of information are sampled. The defence for this method according to May (2001:95) is that it is a 'fit for purpose'

### **4.3 Data Collection**

In spite of these, in choosing the respondents, the researcher sought an equal representation in ethnicity and gender which were major themes in this research. The researcher conducted six (6) semi structured interviews with three female and three male social workers with three of them having a foreign ethnicity. The researcher had previous contact with all except one respondent through a form of pilot study that he conducted while on a field practice. Elements of snowballing cannot be ruled out in the first inquiry in which case the contacts with the respondents were done through snowballing/networking. After the pilot study, the respondents who the researcher felt would contribute greatly to the inquiry were selected in a judgmental way.

In conducting a pilot study, the researcher sought to ensure that the respondents were well informed in the area of inquiry and provided an opportunity where the researcher could frame the questions to suit the respondent. This prior contact also ensured that the interviews were conducted in a relaxed environment with no tensions since the researcher and the respondent were acquainted to each other. Since interviews are like two way traffic, it is imperative that the interviewer has a good grasp of the subject under investigation. Kvale (1996), emphasizes the need for the researcher to have knowledge on the subject, he or she is researching on. I have competence in

this study given my previous work as a probation officer in Kenya where I was specifically involved in the rehabilitation of young offenders.

An interview guide (Appendix 4) was used during the interview. It contained thematic questions relating to the respondents experiences as social workers working with juveniles. The interview started with the general question "You work in the area of juvenile crime prevention, describe to me how you do this". From this question, a conversation was allowed to develop and take any direction but ultimately the interviewer ensured that the main themes in the interview guide were discussed. Interviews took place between 21<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April 2008 in special conference rooms or offices (where there would be no interruptions) within the respondent's place of work. The interview guide was emailed to the respondents a few days before the interviews which lasted approximately 90 minutes, were tape recorded and later transcribed. Brief notes about information that could not be determined from listening to the recordings like the respondent's bio data were taken after the interview. Transcription was done verbatim immediately after the interviews and all the transcripts printed ready for analysis. In doing the transnational comparison with the practice in Kenya, the researcher relied on personal reflections from previous experience of working with young offenders. The views expressed during the analysis are the researcher's although if most social workers would be interviewed, they hold similar opinions.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

The amount of data collected was mountainous and the purpose of analysis was to try to reduce it by fitting it into similar categories or condensing the meaning to exclude irrelevant details. This method of analysis is what Kvale (1996) describes as meaning condensation. He argues that this method of

analysis abridges the meanings expressed by the interviewees into briefer statements.

This study used both an inductive and deductive approaches and at the same time the concept of falsification was tried in data analysis where key traits of certain theories and the empirical data were compared with the aim of falsifying them. Thematic analysis was done where perceptions that were dominant with the respondents and which would provide a good transnational comparison were identified. The themes identified were those that were dominant in the interviews, were similar or could be contrasted between the practice in Kenya and Sweden. It is these themes that the researcher tried to identify in the conversations with social workers and condense the meaning due to limitation of space.

In conducting data analysis, I was also inspired to a lesser extent by discourse analysis, which according to Talja (1999) involves more than taking the respondents account as the entire truth. I took cognizance of my respondents' background, interview situation, facial expressions and also studied the interview texts; reflect on my experiences as a probation officer in Kenya, contextualize the views and try to situate them in a specific theory or a wider theoretical framework.

#### **4.5 Validity, Reliability and Generalizability**

The essence of research is the collection of facts or bits of information in order to prove or debunk theories and hypotheses. The collected information would be useless if it were not accurate, relevant and did not pertain to the topic i.e. if it were not valid. Validity is often defined by asking the question: "Are you measuring what you think you are measuring?" (Kvale, 1996:238) There is a greater emphasis on the exact degree or extent that the information gathered,

assists the researcher in proving the hypothesis. (Kvale, 1996) Interview investigations are common practice in qualitative research; therefore it is significant to illustrate the challenges to validity at the various stages. Thematizing is the first stage and here validity depends on 'the soundness of the theoretical presuppositions of a study'. The second stage is designing in which validity is dependent on the 'adequacy of the design'. In the interviewing stage, validity is dependent on the interviewer's ability to produce a good interview. In transcribing, validity can be compromised if the interview is not correctly translated into writing. In analysis, validity of the questions in the interview and the interpretation are questioned. The questions must not be ambiguous, or we will have response to the wrong questions. In Validation, it entails a reflective look on the process questioning the needs of the study. Finally, reporting where validity of the report refers to an account of the main findings of the study. Steps were taken to ensure the research is valid including avoiding leading questions, ensuring that interviewees had knowledge in the area of inquiry, transcription was done verbatim and every effort was done to minimize interviewer bias. Studying crime prevention strategies in a developed country however posed the challenge of seeing too much good and as such blinding the researcher from the not so good side. On the other hand, looking at the situation in Kenya from 'an outsider with insider knowledge' point of view increases the validity of the findings. Theories chosen are stable and does allow for logical conclusions to be made about the research questions.

Reliability is the consistency of your measurement, or the degree to which an instrument measures the same way each time it is used under the same condition with the same subjects. In short, it is the repeatability of your measurement. The researcher ensured that the results were valid and reliable by ensuring the respondents received the interview guide prior to the interview,

had a chance to look at the guide during the interview, reading the questions to the respondents more than once, the questions were not leading nor ambiguous, the sample was well defined, the interview situation was chosen in a way that it would minimize interference, there was prior contact with the interviewers through a pilot study, questions well formulated and asked in sequence, questioning techniques like probing and prompting were used, interviews tape recorded, the research process and interview situation documented and it is likely that if the study is repeated, similar results could be expected.

The word 'generalizability' is defined as the degree to which the findings can be generalized from the study sample to the entire population. Despite the many positive aspects of qualitative research, studies continue to be criticized for their lack of objectivity and generalizability. Myer (2000) suggests that 'while qualitative studies are not generalizable in the traditional sense of the word, nor do they claim to be, that they have other redeeming features which makes them highly valuable in the education community'. Though the author cannot claim that the results are generalizable, they are significant in their own right and contribute greatly to gaining knowledge about the perceptions of social workers working with juvenile offenders.

#### **4.6 Ethical Issues**

According to Seale (1998) "It has increasingly come to be the case, though, that social researchers are expected to take ethical issues into account when developing a proposal. The amount of attention to ethical issues required depends on the sensitivity of your proposed study".

One of the ethical considerations that the researcher considered was that of informed consent. "Informed consent entails informing the researcher objects

about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project" (Kvale 1996:112). A letter of consent (Appendix 3) containing information about the study, the purpose, implications and benefits including therein contacts of the researcher and supervisor was given. According to May (2001), social researchers should adhere not only to deontological ethical codes (following a set of principles) but also those of consequentialism (the situation that the researchers finds themselves in and consequences of their acts). It will not be possible to identify respondents from the final report as their identity will be concealed and will remain anonymous to others not connected to the study. This study was also based on voluntary participation, a principle which means that respondents were not coerced into taking part.

#### **4.7 Limitations of the Study**

Use of an interview guide has some drawbacks in that sticking to the outlined topics will prevent other important topics from being raised by the respondent. Also, while this format is more systematic than the conversational interview, it is still difficult to compare or analyze data because different respondents are responding to somewhat different questions. Interviews have also been criticized because the findings may not be generalizeable since there are too few subjects. However, in this case, the aim is to obtain general knowledge about youth deviance and hence the focus on a few respondents.

Researchers worry about the effects interviewers may have on validity and reliability of the data. Selltiz and Jahoda in Gilbert (2001:138) argue that 'much of what we call interviewer bias can only be described as interviewer differences, which are inherent in the fact that interviewers are human beings and not machines'

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS

In this analysis, the author has picked a few themes that provide a good platform for a transnational analysis between the practices in Kenya and Sweden. The issues discussed came out vividly during the interviews and could perhaps hold the cue to why juvenile crime prevention is relatively successful in Sweden as opposed to Kenya. First, an examination of the gender discrepancies in offending to understand why there are more boys than girls committing crimes will be done. Then discussions on attachment as an element of behaviour control, how community organization influences criminality, the link between drugs and crime, rehabilitation versus punishment and the juvenile justice and finally the practice of restorative justice and working with victims of crime.

#### 5.1 Examining gender differences in criminality

A number of authors have observed that males commit more crimes than females, (Muncie 2004) though they differ as to the causal explanation. The explanations offered range from biogenetic factors as well as the process of socialization. Giddens (1997:192) acknowledges that the real gender differences in crime rates are less than the official statistics show. Police may regard female offenders as less dangerous than men and let pass activities for which males would be arrested. These views are echoed by SW2 who puts it that:

*I think a lot of girls commit crimes that are never discovered...like sometime boys commit crimes where there is lots of violence, are more open, there is a lot of destruction...sometimes crimes that girls commit are not noticeable. A lot of time also if it's a social worker and a policeman and they see a boy and a girl they look at them differently with different eyes...if you see a group taking drugs, it is easier for the police to take the boys...or there is this girl, she hasn't done anything wrong*

Another Social worker, SW6 notes:

*In school, I always say that we are good at getting sight of boys than girls. Seldom do we suspect girls,*

In answering the question why girls commit fewer crimes despite being exposed to the same criminogenic stimuli, Shaftoe (2004:64) observes that girls and boys are socialized differently encouraged to express, or not express anger, frustration and disappointment differently and are rewarded or not rewarded for sallying forth to take what they want from the world. SW2 continues:

*the girls do it quietly,..Girls have more often turn their frustrations to themselves, we have a lot of girls who cut themselves, are anorexic,*

Social workers in the study do not generally believe that boys commit more girls. They look at it as an issue of girls being less highlighted in the media. They however agree that boys do commit more crime involving violence compared to girls. Could it be that because males are biogenetically larger, stronger and with high metabolic rates than females, they are more prone to take risks, use force to achieve their ends and more easily resort to aggressive behaviour? The social workers think No that it is a question of socialization that as SW4 argues:

*Boys are supposed to be playing football, climbing while girls are supposed to be sitting and talking.*

The differential treatment for boys and girls during childhood is the major influence for example when caring babies, mother are fond of letting the baby face the crowd if its a boy but face her if it's a girl.

In contrast, most Social workers in Kenya will agree that boys commit more crimes than girls. The best explanation is perhaps the one provided by Hagan et al as cited in Britt & Gottfredson (2003). That gender difference depends so much on whether the family unit is patriarchal or egalitarian. Kenya, just like many developing countries in Africa is still a very patriarchal society and the impact of sex-stereotyping is very significant and so is the concept of 'doing gender'. Which means actions should be appropriate to one's gender for example boys are supposed to protect their mothers and sisters, do all the manual work and in adulthood they are the primary breadwinners.

In examining gender differences, one could also draw on strain theory, in that boys/men experience immense pressure to provide for their household units. In a country where resources are scarce and success is measured by capital accumulation, boys/men will due to strain commit more offences. Sweden is on the other hand is quite an egalitarian society, with 80% of the women gainfully



employed<sup>2</sup>. Adler's as quoted in Britt & Gottfredson (2003:86) argument that women continue to be oppressed does not reflect the status of women in modern societies in countries like Sweden. The differences in crime rates between males and females in Sweden would therefore best be summarized as resulting from; lack of serious attention to crimes committed by girls and a lot of focus on crimes by boys as opposed to biological or patriarchal family system.

It has been argued that boys and girls are equally predisposed to criminality during childhood but in the process of socialization, boys act out the inherent criminological predispositions. Social workers interviewed feel that the crime prevention approaches should be similar for both boys and girls. As SW1 notes:

*We try not to differentiate them, because I think those girls who commit crimes do that for the same reason as boys, when we are focusing on crime prevention strategies, we don't develop different strategies for the two groupings. We don't have a conscience program for boys and one for girls*

In reality however, most initiatives do suit boys than girls even though social workers argue that this is often not premeditated. This is especially true of building projects since the building industry is still dominated by males. Paradoxically, most juveniles come from backgrounds where the gender roles are very distinct and where through socialization the girls have learnt that activities like skiing, building is a preserve of men.

## **5.2 Attachment to Parents, Peers and Involvement in Convectional Activities**

There is a link between attachment and the adequacy of socialization, the internalization of norms. The emotional bond between the parent and the child presumably provides the bridge across which parental ideas and expectations pass, (Hirschi, 2006:86).

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics Sweden 2006,

[http://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/LE0202\\_2006A01\\_BR\\_X10ST0602.pdf](http://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/LE0202_2006A01_BR_X10ST0602.pdf) Accessed on 2008-05-20

The family has a large impact on criminal behaviour. Caring, loving, diligent, responsible and righteous parents do not generally produce children who are prone to engage in generalized problematic behaviour (Britt and Gottfredson, 2003:22). Social workers interviewed agree on the importance of a strong parent-child bond as one way of preventing young people from engaging in delinquent behaviour. As SW 3 notes:

*Children who don't have good growth conditions like getting love, protection, and security from parent are more likely to commit crime. The parents are very important, as number one for the kids.*

Good parents who are able to guide a young person to a life of virtue is a prerequisite for good and moral behaviour. Hirschi (2006) argues that in families in which parents care about their children's behaviour, in which they monitor their children's actions, in which they recognize deviant behaviour and in which they penalize illegitimate use of force and fraud, self control becomes a stable characteristic of the child. Do parents in the contemporary Swedish society provide their children with a positively valued environment for good growth? Most social workers interviewed argued that more need to be done. As SW1 puts it:

*My opinion is that the Swedish people are very reluctant to interfere in the relationship between a parent and child, much too reluctant. They will do something if they see that the child isn't being looked after, if there is a clear abuse and they will do something...but I think there is a grey area, the lack of care without going into abuse where I think one would do more*

The social workers feel that parents have an unnecessarily big stake on the upbringing of children. The parents have the final say, so much that when social workers suspect problems at the family level and invite the parent to a meeting, the parent could easily deny existence of problems in the family and that will be it. As SW6 put it:

*In Sweden we listen a lot to the parent, for example if I write to the social welfare and tell them I have a young person and perhaps he/she has a younger brother/sister that am worried about, the social worker writes a letter to parent who can say no. It is only when the parents are drug*

*abusers; hit their child and so on, that is when the social welfare intervenes.*

In Kenya, the family unit is very much intertwined with the concept of neighbourhood. It is not uncommon for a neighbour to stop a child on the street and rebuke them for behaviour that contradicts societal norms. The positive family environment is not necessarily defined as attachment to just the father and mother but to the grandparents, uncles and aunties and the neighbours. The social controls are high and there is that tendency for every youth to feel watched by those around them. However, this is still much of a phenomenon of the rural setting. Urbanization is rapidly diminishing the effects of these valued bonds of attachment with convection others and this is further complicated by the absence of a strong and vibrant social welfare system like the one in Sweden to intervene where the community fails. The value of these attachments is being eroded as western values continue to infiltrate the lives of the younger generation. The result is increased criminality among youths.

One of the key predictors of juvenile crime I observed while working with young offenders in Kenya was single motherhood. A majority of young persons in contact with the law came from broken families. Asked whether a young person from single-mother household has a high propensity to commit crime in Sweden, social workers interviewed feel that it is not a major factor. However, they feel that the presence of a male role model, not necessarily the father is good especially for the boys. The welfare system ensures that the father not only maintains contact with his children but also provides for them in the form of child support. On the contrary, an absentee father in Kenya would rarely keep in contact with his family, leave alone provide for them.

Parental groups were identified as a strategy that would help parents discuss and learn child rearing issues from each other. Such initiatives it was felt should be made by schools in collaboration with the social welfare department. The Non Governmental organizations have been involved in such projects in Sweden while in Kenya it is uncommon.

The ability to provide youths with recreational activities was also identified as a major crime prevention strategy. Young people have a lot of energies that need to be channeled to positive activities. As Hirschi (2006:21) argues, the difference between those who commit crimes and those who do not is because the former

have opportunities for satisfying their recreational interests while the latter do not. This reaffirms the widely quoted adage 'idle hands are a devil's workshop'. As SW5 observes:

*Society should be able to provide recreational activities, everything is organized here and even to play football you have to join a club, if the parent cannot afford, those kids will not play football. Those kids from poor backgrounds should have alternatives.*

The influence of the peers has also been suggested as cause of anti-social behaviour among young people. Of particular importance is the participation in gangs. As SW2 notes:

*If you associate with older people who are committing crimes, I think influence is one of the biggest (risk factor) because when we are with the police and some people are caught for the first time in crime, a lot of time they were with someone, like a new friend, someone that the parent didn't know about, and that we know has committed crime previously ...*

### **5.3 Community Disorganization**

Having made those observations, it is important to realize that other factors have a direct impact on family circumstances and peer relationships. "...family factors never operate in a vacuum but [instead] take place against a backdrop of other influences, including such things as the community, the school system, and the economic or cultural circumstances of cities, regions, and even nations. These contexts often are relevant to crime, and they may significantly alter the consequences of different family variables" Carter Hay et al (2006).

As SW2 observed:

*I think if there has been violence in the home, sexual abuse in the home, drug abuse, neglect... Sometimes if there has been a serious loss, a bad divorce, all over the sudden the parents are not there like they were before, these are risk factors*

During one of my field visits to Fagared, a young offender's institution, I was not surprised when I was told by a Social Worker there that over 70% of those who are in the institution have a foreign ethnic background. This is perhaps because the opportunities for youths with a migrant background are more constrained; their parents are unemployed and so they cannot afford the material things that the Swedish society (especially among the young generation) appear to value so much like latest mobile phones, mopeds, ipod's, latest fur jackets and so on. In effect, the youths who experience considerable pressure to be 'like the ordinary Swedish youth' have no recourse than to acquire that which society values in an unjust ways.

These sentiments are echoed by SW6:

*Most Swedish children have working parents while most immigrants' parents depend on social welfare benefits. We should not have enormous gap in Sweden, we have had a socialist regime for 40 years, we now have a Government that want these gaps, their way of having a society. The poor are getting poor, we are going in the wrong direction.*

Could it be that immigrants in Sweden face numerous frustrations that lead them to crime? SW5 notes that:

*Most youths who commit crimes are mainly from a foreign country whereby within the housing areas there are a lot of social problems, unemployment and language problems...all these frustrations reflect on the child's behaviour*

Undeniably, a lot of young people with a foreign background are continually brushing with the law; whether it is a question of possessing high criminal tendencies, victimization due to ethnic background or strains of the western world is not the major concern. Social workers interviewed echo the immediate concern for integration. That the segregation into particular neighbourhoods is a cause to worry and could be a time bomb before the situation gets out of hand. SW2 notes:

*If you look at groups, who are not functioning well, parents do need to have a job in order to get respect from the child that they go to work and earn money for the family. A lot of immigrants who go to the same school, it should not be like that, they should be mixed. If you give them a chance to integrated, a Swede may say "All black people are like this except for my best friend". They all should not just live in the bigger cities where they can get good opportunities.*

A link can be established between the disorganization of communities and the prevalence of criminality. On the one hand, when young people come to Sweden and all over sudden the community which used to look after them is no longer there, they would tend to lose the control that neighbourhood and communities previously exercised on them. SW2 observed that:

*I think is more like that you don' t know each other well, if I steal a car and don't know it is my neighbour's then it is difficult compared it is anybody's and especially now that people travel a lot is hard to know people who will be hurt by your crime, if you walk down the street and have been drinking, if you see your neighbor you will not get into a fight with him but if it is someone else, it doesn't matter.*

This is line with the core assumption of social disorganization theory that strong networks of social relationships prevent crime and delinquency.

#### **5.4 Drugs and crime**

There is a wide belief among the general population world wide that drugs causes crimes. The main argument is that addicts do not work and cannot find jobs. Drugs costs money and so many therefore rely on crime for money to buy drugs and also earn a living by stealing and robbing from others. Individuals upon taking drugs lose emotional control and tend to easily result to violence and criminality. Besides, most drugs in question are classified as illegal and their use is a violation of law and as such these individuals get absorbed in the criminal justice system. Asked whether there is a direct link between criminality and drug abuse, SW6 felt that:

*Not a hundred percent but in many ways, if you started with drugs, you would need money and therefore crime, it is a crime to have drugs in Sweden and you would need to associate yourself with criminals, drugs*

*also make you behave in criminal ways, some drugs take away sympathy...*

It would be in order to argue that a society with a high number of drug abusers is likely to witness high rates of crime. Does it follow then that focusing on alleviating drug use can eliminate criminality? SW2 feels that:

*If we eliminate drugs, crime will go down but will not been eliminated...I did an exchange in Copenhagen some years back where they were working with drug addicts doing a lot of break- ins, they had a method of treating all the people in the area, crime went down but went high again because the addicts still needed money for other things.*

These views are echoed by SW1 who argues that:

*I think it is short sighted to think that if we stamp out drug abuse, we won't have crime any more. Drugs make it easier for others to commit crime; it lifts the lock on anger...like abuse is a crime related to alcohol.*

The social workers interviewed feel that there is no direct link between crime and drugs but are quick to add that certain crimes especially those involving violence are often related to drugs and especially alcohol abuse. In trying to explain the drug-crime connection, Lab (2004:221) notes that deviance may be the result of psychopharmacological reaction (a drug impels an individual to act in a way society deems unacceptable), economic need or simple participation in the drug trade.

Sweden guided by the vision of a drug free society had made strides in eliminating drug use. This vision is helped by its strategic location where it avoids contact with the drug routes in Europe. The use of drug is criminalized and sanctioned by the justice system, usually attracting severe punishment. There are drug programs in schools that emphasis on giving the young person the ability to say NO to drugs. One such program is the SET (social emotional training) and focuses on developing the emotional strength and confidence to resist peer pressure to engage in crime. There are rehabilitation programs run by numerous NGO's and Government departments in which offenders are referred to instead of serving sentences. Such programs incorporate both the therapeutic as well as the medical components of the treatment approach.

Equally, the use of, possession and trafficking in drugs is against the law in Kenya. While working with the criminal justice system, my observation was that over 70 per cent of those who were brought to court in a given week pleaded to the offence of being drunk and disorderly. Does it follow then that if certain offences are decriminalized, then we might as well witness a drastic decrease in the number people in contact with the law? This is especially true of crimes that are to a large extent petty like being arrested for being too drunk. Kenya, as a developing country has no resources that can be directed to initiating drug prevention programs for its 34 million people. Consequently, many people including youths who have drug problems and who are in need of help are sent to prison and that contributes to criminality during their latter years brought about by being labeled and stigmatized.

### **5.5 Working in Partnerships and Situational Crime prevention**

The police alone cannot handle crime problem, there are factors underlying crime and disorder in the community that cannot be handled solely through arrest, prosecution and incarceration. Across Europe, North America and Australasia crime prevention has become intimately bound up with the proliferation of a partnership approach where various relevant agencies, organizations and the public are summoned into being active co-producers of crime prevention and public safety, Crawford (1998). Sweden is no exception and has not been left behind in this regard, a very good example of this partnership approach in the Ung och Trygg i Göteborg (translated into Young and Safe). It is an initiative that brings together schools, social welfare, the prosecutors, the police and housing companies to a working relationship whose vision is a safe and secure city where youth have a right to participate and believe in a better future. On the need to work together, SW5 asserts that:

*Every organization police, schools, social services...has their assigned responsibility, individually they do their work but realistically they cannot solve the holistic problems that the individuals are facing, so the best way to find solutions is to make these organizations work together*

The Ung och Trygg partnership emphasizes cooperation among the partners with a particular attention to regular meetings to discuss issues of youth criminality. Its action plan include swift action when a young person commits crime, working for narcotic free districts, creating jobs for youths, strengthening



schools and parents. The achievements since its establishment in 2004 include helping initiate a working system where there is a social worker in every police station to respond to juveniles, collaborating with the police department in training scores of specialized police officers to handle juvenile offenders, initiating a working system where first time offenders appear before the prosecutor every second Friday for cautioning, creating jobs for youths and helping the youths settle and especially helping them secure housing contacts. Partnerships have been hailed for many reasons, as SW2 notes:

*Because when we have meetings, we can talk about a specific child and those involved have an idea of what that family needs and we can work in the same direction, it is better than if the police, schools, social services have different ideas and may confuse the family but if we meet and talk we can pull in the same direction, we can also decide who is the person that this family should have most contact with, instead of going to five different meetings maybe they can have one or two meetings, to make sure that we can make a good program*

The problem with such initiatives is that they are sparked off by a tragedy as opposed to being a positive and conscience effort by the political establishment. In this case by a shooting in a public beach as SW4 asserts:

*It was housing company that saw there had been problems out there in the suburb; city square and inhabitant did not dare go out squares and local the market, so they decided to do something about it. ... the sparking and the whole work was shoot out was done in a public beach here in Goteborg and police reacted and we had to do something and housing company were on the way too, so these two met and said it okey so we can do it together, the housing company had money and police have knowledge and come to social workers and school together*

Asked how the support center for young victims of crime started, SW2 observed that:

*started in Stockholm, and the woman who started this program was earlier working with young people who committed crimes and she saw that no one was working with those who were the victims, there was a big*

*catastrophe where a lot of young people would get burnt in a house...we thought why not start something with the victims*

Besides this formal and institutionalized partnership approach, there exist numerous working relationships among the different agencies. Asked the sort of partnerships that they have developed, SW6 noted that:

*Like with Unga brottsoffer, (support center for young victims of crime), church, the police...With Unga brottsoffer, we send victims there for assistance, the police come to parades and talk to the students about different issues, they also walk around and talk to the students (now they don't come as often, maybe it is because of money), and a good priest who comes to classes and talks about ethics*

In Kenya, there is no conscious partnership approach that targets juvenile crime prevention. The existing relationships are general and do not aim at prevention per se but discussing options and ways to help those who have already been subjected to the criminal justice system. Such working relationships take the form of case conferences and committees which are dominated by those working in the justice system. However, Kenya has embraced the idea of community policing whereby the police and the general public are partners not just in form of reporting crime when it occurs but being actively involved in identifying and solving the root problems of crime in the community. There has been a conscious program of training more police officers, a media campaign enlisting the help from the public in identifying criminals in the community by providing information to police, decentralization of police services and a campaign to change the image of the police, notable among them the change of name from Kenya Police Force to Kenya Police Service. Kenya has also in the recent past embarked on an ambitious program of lighting the streets and soon will be installing cameras in crime hot spots as a way of curbing criminality.

Situational crime approaches entails making crime hard to commit, such a strategy means we don't need to know what makes the offender tick in order to make the victim safer. Mayhew quoted in Shafitoe (2004:80) observed, "we don't need to know the motivation of a speeding motorist to know that placing a sleeping policeman in the road will slow him or her down". Social workers interviewed do not generally believe in making use of cameras, hard to break locks and walls as a measure of preventing criminality. SW5 observes:

*If you put locks, even walls don't work. You cannot safeguard society with locks and security men, if people don't have jobs and you keep on protecting those who have jobs, you are excluding yourself, a hungry person is an angry person...Cameras will not solve our problems, those who commit crimes don't even think about the cameras, they are high on drugs, they don't commit crimes with a clean mind. I don't believe in that*

These sentiments are echoed by SW3

*We have everything but it doesn't work, only work just after putting them, thereafter everyone forgets about them...When I look at the violent crimes committed, those kids know the cameras are there, they see the cameras but still do it.*

And SW1:

*I think Sweden focuses more on the criminal despite having the technical ability to focus on the crime. I think you should focus on the person, I don't think it helps to focus on the crime...The two should be complementary...When people have strong inner morality then you don't need those controls and this is how it has been in Sweden.*

Previous research as discussed in the last chapter has shown that situational measures can only be short term measure in crime prevention. This is because of the problems of displacement, the fact that technology can be used by offenders against the victims and that it becomes redundant besides being prone to the ingenuity of criminals.

## **5.6 Rehabilitation versus Punishment and the Justice System**

The widely held view that juveniles are immature than adults and in need of protection has been used to justify a distinction between juvenile and adult law breaking. To this end, certain countries notable among them, Kenya, have established a juvenile justice system different from that of adults. Juvenile offenders are heard in a children's court that is guided by the value of acting in the child best's interest which in most cases results in such young people being placed under care. In Sweden on the other hand, issues involving young offenders are heard and determined by administrative courts and often the outcome is to place the juvenile under care.

In these two countries, there is a conscious and deliberate effort to subject children to rehabilitative as opposed to punitive justice. The widely acknowledged belief that imprisonment is an expensive way of making a bad person worse seems to be the prevailing ideology within the juvenile crime discourse. Efforts are made to try as much as possible to delay a young person's encounter with the criminal justice system.

The need for early and swift measures when a person commits crime was also identified as crime prevention strategy. The belief underlying this view is the sometimes some offenders commit crimes but no one responds. They walk away with it, this could have been their first shoplifting but builds up to a life of criminality. It then becomes a difficult task to try to entangle the youngster from the intricate web of criminality. The need to look beyond the person, a consideration for their social environment particularly the home situation was also proposed. As SW5 so well puts it:

*In case an offence has already occurred, the response should be fast and firm. Society should look at the underlying causes, why they have started shoplifting for example and when that is found, there is need to look at the entire background, are the parents employed...You have to help the parents sometimes, providing help to parents with drug problem for example would go a long way in helping the child as well.*

SW2 drawing on her experience said:

*The first time a child commits a crime like takes a candy bar in the store, it is important that there is a reaction to it because if you get away with something in the first place, it is easier to try to get away with it a second time. When I work with the narcotics I have met a lot people who were in organized crime, they ask when I was 14 I did this and that, why didn't anybody react, if people would react earlier I would not have been caught in this mess. It is important to intervene early even if you think it is a really small thing, it is important that the child notice that if the people think it is serious, then it is something that I shouldn't do anymore...*

According to Gottfredson and Hirschi in Britt and Gottfredson (2003:7), "control theory sees criminal acts to be as easy as falling down a mountain, ...as split second events requiring little time for execution, as exciting, risky or thrilling and

as producing meager short term benefits". The argument put forward by the social workers is that crime most often is caused by the spur of the moment and that most teenagers will indulge in the anti-social behaviour. The difference between those who get sanctioned into criminality and those who don't comes as a result of the reaction of those around the child. "At the same time, the theory suggests that increasing the certainty of sanctions may produce the desired effects, especially if such increase also reduces the time delay in their implementation. Because immediate costs and benefits dominate the thinking of individuals with low self control, even they will tend to be intimidated by the prospects of rapid reaction by the criminal justice system" (ibid:13)

Imprisoning young offenders did not receive support from any social worker interviewed; neither did corporal punishment at home or in school. Contrary to the popular adage that sparing the rod spoils the child, the social workers felt that this form of deterrence is counterproductive to the extent that it promotes violence. Durrant (2000:438) has reviewed various the views of various authors on corporal punishment which includes arguments that it is harmful to children and predicts higher levels of aggression, that it should be there as a disciplinary tool and its abolishment is an infringement on parental rights, it violates a child's right to physical integrity and that the interests of the child should prevail whenever the interest of the parents and those of the child conflict.

Sweden was the first country to abolish corporal punishment; the Swedish law states that "Children are entitled to care, security and a good upbringing. Children are to be treated with respect for their person, and individuality, and may not be subjected to physical punishment or other injurious or humiliating treatment (Chapter 6, Section 1, Förordningsbalken as quoted in Durrant, 2004). In the report examining trends in youth crime since the abolishment of corporal punishment, Durrant (2004:451) concludes that "...Swedish youth have not become unruly, under socialized or self-destructive following the passing of the 1979 corporal punishment ban". In Kenya, as elsewhere in most of Africa, the parent has authority to exercise reasonable force and physical punishment in disciplining their children. There is a widely held belief that youths in Kenya would engage in anti social behaviour should corporal punishment be abolished, besides this would undermine the traditional child rearing practice that emphasize spanking the child to put them back on 'track' when they misbehave.

Arguing against corporal punishment, Hirschi, (2006) notes that "control theory predicts that change in certainty, severity or alacrity of such punishment will have little effect on crime rates...criminal justice penalties are typically too far removed in time for individuals low on self control to incorporate them into decision-making, however harsh such penalties might be"

The role of young offender's institution in rehabilitation has not been without question marks, the extent to which these institutions succeed in reforming and reducing recidivism has been doubted. The social workers emphasis on early intervention to the extent that some believe that we may not need these institutions if there are early and effective measures to prevent criminality at an early age. Most of the Social workers interviewed cast doubt over the extent to which these institutions can succeed in reforming offenders. SW3 observed that:

*Such institutions have not succeeded. I have been working in Fagared (one of the young offenders' institutions in Sweden) and they would work with all the children. They had different problems but were kept together and influenced each other, a bad mixture.*

What the social worker quoted is referring to is social contagion where ideas, beliefs and behaviour relevant to crime are transmitted in a social environment. In Kenya, this is a major cry among the agitators of reforms in the juvenile justice. Children who have committed status offences and who are in need of care and protection are sometimes locked up with others who have robbed, murdered or raped. However, the young offender's institutions work to the extent that they bring safety in the community by putting away the troublesome juveniles; the social workers interviewed acknowledged their importance in this regard.

All the six social workers interviewed cast doubts over the justice system in Sweden arguing that more needs to be done. Some questioned the extent to which the juvenile justice system in Sweden is impartial. SW3 observed that:

*You can get two different punishments, I have seen like two boys of the same age committed the same crime, one with a foreign background and the other Swedish. The immigrant got the juvenile home and the Swedish kid was sentenced to social welfare offices for counseling. I don't understand why, I don't believe in our juvenile justice system*

Increasingly, citizens of countries in Western Europe are blaming immigrants for increased crime. As Wacquant writes in Ajani (2003), "there is every chance that the societies of Western Europe will generate analogous, albeit less pronounced, situations to the extent that they, too, embark on the path of the penal management of poverty and inequality . . . not only to curb crime, but also to regulate the lower segments of the labor market and to hold at bay populations judged to be disreputable, derelict, and unwanted. From this point of view, foreigners and quasi-foreigners would be 'the blacks' of Europe" Could an impartial justice system for example explain the 70% rate of incarceration of youths with a foreign ethnic background in Sweden? SW5 said,

*I get furious when kids born in Sweden being referred as foreigners just because their parents were not born in Sweden, which is still stigmatization because they are looked at differently, punished harshly and don't get enough attention, it creates a problem when you don't address issues as societal problem but as ethnic problems*

## **5.7 Restorative Justice and Supporting victims of crime**

Sweden has embraced restorative justice as a way of repairing relationships that are severed by a criminal act. Mediation is offered as a matter of right thanks to legislation by the Government to that effect. The social workers support mediation efforts and is regarded as a promising strategy. SW6 notes:

*Mediation I think is good, is a recent development here, It is important to get the victim to feel something about what they have done, if they feel bad, they might not do it again.*

However, as previous research suggests, there are a lot of promising options within restorative justice that Sweden has not embraced, this includes mediation work with those in jail and conflict resolution in schools to curb problems like bullying. As SW1 suggests:

*I would like to see a lot more personal programmes, mediation as an integral part of the system and a shift from punishment to rehabilitation.*

Comparatively, Kenya is yet to fully embrace restorative justice in the form of mediation and conflict resolution. Existing forms of mediation are carried out haphazardly by officers allied to the justice system especially probation officers.

However, a restorative justice approach in the form of community service exists within the legal framework and is largely seen as a success. The problem of absconding on assigned duties remains a challenge for both countries. As SW3 remarks asked about the effectiveness of community service:

*No, I don't think it is working...Because I have seen, we said they get community service and we have said that social services need to make sure that this person if followed up, the person is not doing the work, you call the prosecutor and report...they hardly get another punishment.*

Perhaps one great achievement in Sweden compared to Kenya is the practice of working with victims of crime. Social workers interviewed observe that in most cases offenders have at some point been victims of crime, most often the unreported crimes. They are likely to develop criminality from an incident where they were victims. SW2 notes:

*young people who have been victims of crime get very hateful, and if it is like a person from a particular country who did this to you, you become aggressive towards all the people from that country and maybe you become very scared, you would carry a weapon with you and if you are scared and have a weapon with you, the next time you get into a situation it is easier for you to be the one who commits the crime*



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION**

The following narratives have been derived from the Social workers interview and upon the author's reflection. The first narrative, how to be a criminal in Sweden, recounts on what the social workers saw as the biggest risk factors to juvenile delinquency in Sweden. It is reconstructed from the interviews with the social workers and particularly the question of why youths with a foreign ethnic background commit more crimes. The second narrative, how to be a criminal in Kenya, is based upon the stories told to the author while working as a probation officer in charge of juvenile offenders in Kenya. It is purely based on personal reflections of the stories told by the youths who had committed crimes.

#### **6.1 Becoming a Criminal in Sweden**

Human beings are not genetically predisposed to criminality; they pick up the vice through the process of socialization. However, being a male means you are more likely to offend (or be seen to offend) as compared to females. So, let us assume you are a boy born in a developing country facing disruptions due to violence, you witnesses horrifying acts of violence, you could be a child soldier, this means no chance to get education or to learn how to relate with others. Your family manages to seek asylum in Sweden and they secure an apartment in one of the segregated neighborhoods in Gothenburg city. You receive no psychological intervention as a way of trying to resolve the past traumatic experiences and to try to make you adaptable to the Swedish society that has at its core equality, democracy and freedom.

Your parents cannot seek gainful employment because they cannot speak Swedish and are not job ready, they will live on social welfare. The money is essentially to buy life necessities, so you cannot get your parent to buy the latest Ipod, mobiles phone, and fur winter jacket. Thanks to the mass media and especially advertising, you will experience a lot of stress to acquire material stuff in the new society. You cannot join a club to play your favourite sport because that costs money too. Your parents will be confused, affected by the loosening of the extended family networks, culturally rejected and you will experiences a moral vacuum by abandoning your religion, you will not be sure whether to adapt to the culture of your parent or that of the new society.

You will easily join school, learn the language fast and about the new culture to the extent that your parent may lose control especially when you start translating for them and they don't know how most things work. Due to the segregation and lack of recreational activities, you together with youths from the neighborhood hang around together in groups; you come to learn of the criminal gangs, the bikers and so on. To you, criminality is a short cut in life, you know your parents don't have jobs and you are likely to end in a similar status. You join a criminal gang and start targeting upper and middle class Swedish youths in the neighboring areas and robbing them of the material valuables that you need so badly to belong, the latest mobile phones and music gadgets. Since the Government withdrew field assistants citing the need for financial cut down, you are less likely to meet a social worker who will guide you or offer alternatives.

Just like in other segregated areas, the police patrols are more frequent in this neighborhood and soon the long arm of the law will catch up with you. A trial is held and the verdict is delivered, you will be sent to Fagared, a youth offender's institution in the outskirts of the city. You will spend some years in the institution but maybe released earlier if you are of good behavior. Contrary to the conditions that you are familiar with in offender institutions back home, you might find yourself in a single room, with a stereo and a common room where you can watch TV and use a play station. Until recently, you could enjoy sauna, you can play with other youths, will be taught by a teacher and have an option to do music or study computer. You will enjoy good meals, three times a day and on top of that, earns some monthly income for making your room tidy.

You mix with other juvenile offenders who have committed all sorts of crime, from violent crimes to drug abuse, 70% of those in the institution will most likely have a foreign background like you, you will feel like being in a family and in this way criminality is learnt, when you leave the institution, you might carry a few more criminal lessons. Since the rate of recidivism is as high as 70%, you may as well start looking forward to going back there again, you might by now be abusing drugs. There will be no follow up, the assumption is that you have reformed. You will find your way to school, thanks to the law that forbids information sharing even within Government agencies, the new school will never know you have a criminal record. Even in high school, you might never get real contact and be integrated with the Swedish people because you will most likely

be attending a school where the majority of students are immigrants. You will continue influencing other students who are mainly from a similar ethnic background. Your parents may not be active around you, they may not even attend PTA meetings because they cannot understand Swedish. When the school finally discovers of you behavior, you might be chased away from school for good. You will be labeled a deviant, a juvenile out to spoil others and a criminal. You will be remanded in police custody and even subjected to court appearance. Society will already have imposed a label on him, you will feel that your identity is already spoilt and will even want to associate with the new label. Other youths may look upon you as being famous and try to emulate him.

You may serve several prison sentences but the punishment will not be a deterrence neither will it be severe enough according to your judgment and comparing what you are familiar with, opportunities to commit an offence will seem to crop up in your path. You will adapt a criminal way of life and since there is no death sentence in Sweden while the life sentence usually means ten years<sup>3</sup>, you can always look forward to going back to the community.

## **6.2 Becoming a Criminal in Kenya**

Assuming you are born in Kenya, you will be a citizen of one the world's most unequal society<sup>4</sup>. Chances are, you will be born into a large family of up to ten siblings and due to poverty you will experience hardship right from day one. Your father will probably be the only bread winner and you will be lucky to go to school thanks to the free primary education. Your education will be constantly interrupted due to demands within the family unit. You will be expected to help in household chores and even in economic activities like farming or working to earn the family a livelihood. The demands in school will be equally great; you might find yourself in trouble with teachers for failing to do your homework. Often you will face punishment ranging from beating to working in the school compound. At your age, these strains will pressure you to give up perhaps also

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<sup>3</sup> Janson Carl Gunnar (2004:419), Youth Justice in Sweden in Tonry and Door'a Youth Crime and Youth Justice, Comparative and Cross National Perspectives, University of Chicago, Chicago

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=281&language=en\\_US](http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=281&language=en_US), Retrieved on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008

encouraged by other peers who have become truant and ran away from home.

You might find yourself in the streets and slowly being part of a gang, robbing innocent civilians, begging and doing small menial jobs. The long arm of the law might catch up with you sooner rather than later. You will be remanded for up to two weeks as a probation officer writes your report, never mind you might be only 14 years old. The report is likely to recommend that you be placed in a young offender's institution for a period of one year. Don't expect to receive much help from there; an institution with a capacity of 80 maybe holding up to 369 youths and only one fully qualified social worker<sup>5</sup>. The only courses they offer are tailoring, masonry, and carpentry while your interest could be in mechanics. You will interact with other young criminals, learn criminality and even plot an escape from the institution. This will not be difficult since there are no physical barriers, alarm system or security men guarding you at the institution. The probation officers might as well not follow you because they have a huge case load of young people who will respond positively to the help being offered.

You will have now graduated into a criminal, probably doing drugs by now. You will have received the label of a criminal. The police records will make it impossible for you to get a job, peers will be warned against associating with you. Your identity will have been spoilt. You will act out the label that society has put on you, you will engage in criminality, stealing, violent robberies, rapes, burglary, and drug trafficking. Partly, your inability to cope in a legal way will emanate from frustration of trying to succeed in the highly capitalist country where success is measured by capital accumulation. At the same time, your family might be facing economic problems; your father may have been retrenched due to alcoholism or even in line with World Bank structural adjustment programs, stressed by the dismissal and feeling of not being in a position to take care of the family financially, he may equally take off with the lump sum golden handshake to the coastal town and squander the money with prostitutes. Your mother will perhaps become a commercial sex worker as an

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/documents/742\\_jj\\_ngorep\\_kenya.htm](http://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/documents/742_jj_ngorep_kenya.htm) Retrieved on 20th May 2008

easy way to provide for your nine siblings. This will open the door for your other siblings to follow your path and become deviant too.

You will have probably passed the age of 18 and any brush with the law will send you to prison. Thanks to the prison reform programme, the prison conditions will be better compared to the picture of congestion seen sometimes back. If you are of good behaviour while in prison, don't be surprised by a sudden release when the Head of State invokes Presidential powers and pardons you. You might as well start looking back to going back the moment you leave the prison gate. You will have by now learnt the tricks, formed gangs and become entangled in the web of illegal drugs and criminality and you must by now be committing high profile robberies in banks. If you survive a Policeman's bullet, you might get the title 'Most Wanted' and that will make you (in)famous, when you are finally caught, you might receive a death sentence or be sentenced to life imprisonment which literally means life in prison.

### **6.3 Concluding Discussion**

The above narratives serve to conclude this report by highlighting the key predictors of criminality in Kenya and Sweden in line with one of the research questions. It is evident that being from a foreign ethnic background is a risk factor to crime in Sweden, not because of biogenetic makeup but due to social strain and disorganization that newly arrived immigrant youths experience. Similarly, the strains and social disorganization brought about by poverty, compounded by family disruptions, health and social problems contribute significantly to deviance among youths in Kenya. The narratives show that in both countries, not enough is being done to create good conditions for children to be brought up in. There is need to address underlying causes of delinquency which include socio-economic hardships, psychological problems resulting from traumatic experiences and inequalities. Ultimately, the best prevention programs will be those that mitigate against family disruptions that is brought about by the these root causes of delinquency. As the report has shown, calls have been made by social workers in Sweden for parental groups to be set up, psychological help initiated, and integration of immigrants as means of assisting youths at risk. In the Kenyan context, there is need to address inequalities and

initiate poverty alleviation strategies, strengthen capacities of care institutions as measures to curb youth crime.

In considering the link between drugs and crime in Sweden, it can be argued that a combination of factors make the link appear less direct and strong in the eyes of the social workers. Such factors could be identified as a highly restrictive drug policy, a well developed, professional, equipped and independent police service, Sweden's geographical position that avoids contact with most of Europe's drug routes, low unemployment rates and a social protective net in the form of social welfare, a well developed drug treatment and rehabilitation system and drug prevention programs in school. As the Swedish population increasingly becomes multi ethnic, new drugs like *khat* are becoming popular among certain groups and this pose a challenge to the drug policy as culture and law clash amidst the language barrier. It is without doubt that decriminalization of certain acts like being drunk could reduce reported offences in a country like Kenya struggling with a strained judicial system. More importantly, there is need to realize that not everyone who abuses drugs is a criminal, some people genuinely need help to get out of addiction and sending them to prison only makes them worse. Drug treatment, decriminalization of certain offences and school based drug prevention programs work in preventing juvenile crime.

The research has shown that whereas Sweden has made major achievements in technological knowhow and invested in making crimes harder to commit by installing high tech surveillance and monitoring systems, social workers acknowledge the need to focus on the criminal as opposed to the crime. Technology serves a purpose but should not be a substitute to other offender based programs that tries to understand why people commit crime. I argue that the recent efforts that Kenyan authorities have directed towards situational crime prevention are bound to fail if the root causes of crimes are not addressed. Protecting the haves against the have not's only serves to widen the rifts of inequalities, creates frustrations and anger and one way of expressing these feelings is through crime.

Supported by both strain and social disorganization theories, the research has shown that capitalist societies that value wealth accumulation like Kenya are bound to have populations experiencing a lot of strain. Sweden has always

been seen as an egalitarian society but in recent years the income gaps are increasing as the richer becomes richer. Empirical data from this research shows that most social workers are unhappy with the direction the political establishment is taking in terms of the economy. The perceived high rates of criminality among youths with a migrant background are better explained by strain theory. Sweden is a wealthy country with many rich people who can afford a high standard of living. The new immigrants are economically deprived since they cannot access jobs, initially cannot speak Swedish and are not well integrated into society. This creates a situation of 'poverty in the midst of plenty'. The economic problems trigger family disruptions which lead to poor academic performance, poor relationships with the teachers and parents, they feel discriminated and victimized against, this leads to development of negative feelings towards the mainstream society and one way out of these strains is through crime.

I have through feminist lenses examined the perceptions of social workers as to the difference in criminality between boys and girls. I have argued that feminist theories of criminology that attribute high rates of criminality among males to constraints on women may not apply for Sweden. This is because in terms of gender equality, Sweden has made major gains and women cannot be said to be oppressed. That the patriarchal family system is best suited to explain differences in criminality among males and females in Kenya since men still dominate virtually all spheres of life. Supported by control theory, I argue that measures like affirmative action to curb problems like corruption and embezzlement at the institutional level may not succeed because both men and women are exposed to the same criminogenic tendencies like self interest. Affirmative action aims at making women more like men, oppression of women has the positive unintended consequence (albeit an unpopular one) of controlling crime. I argue that in the Kenyan context, efforts should be geared towards limiting the spheres that men control and campaigning against patriarchy, essentially making men more like women which entails control. The practices by social workers interviewed in this study point to gender blindness especially when it comes to designing recreational and convectional activities, prevention programs like building projects and so on. It is imperative that practitioners take cognizance of the concept of 'doing gender' in implementing prevention programs particularly those involving youths with a migrant background. This is because some girls are socialized to view certain

activities as purely boys' affairs and disregarding it conflicts with the value of professionalism.

The partnership approach to community safety is a success according to the social workers although most felt that the police dominate the partnership and are likely to dictate the direction that such efforts take. There is more that can be done to the partnership especially finding more corporate partners who are willing to sponsor youths at risk in vocational and recreational activities. This is because social workers reaffirmed the widely held view that idle children are prone to engage in criminality. Sports can be used to foster good relationships between schools and by extension neighbourhoods. Sweden can learn from Kenya's successful inter schools sports and music festivals to address problems of rivalry among youths living in different suburbs. Schools are an important arena for crime prevention and all programs that aim at giving youths self control have been identified as among those that work. On the other hand, there is so much that Kenya can learn from Sweden, key among them is implementing the partnership approach, working with victims of crime, restorative justice and initiating drug treatment programs. Intervention programs in both countries are only initiated when there is a crisis. Deliberate will on the powers that be is largely lacking despite the importance of community safety. Crime prevention strategies in both countries appear to be conceived only when catastrophes occur. There is need to recognize that youths are at risk of engaging in criminality and therefore everything possible to avert this should be done through a continuous and conscience process. In Sweden, there is an urgent need to harmonize legislation touching on confidentiality because this law limit information sharing between schools and social services for example and inhibits rehabilitation efforts. This is particularly true of information held of past juvenile offenders by social services departments and which cannot be easily transferred to schools. This law inhibits the cooperation between agencies working with offenders which the justice system seeks to promote.

As studies have shown in Sweden, corporal punishment cannot succeed where good parenting and early intervention has failed in preventing youth criminality. It could as a matter of fact be counterproductive, serving to promote aggression and violence. Could the high levels of violence experienced in the Kenyan society be attributed to children's upbringing that includes harsh physical punishment for indiscipline? Recently, there has been a move to ban



corporal punishment in Kenyan schools, as research might indicate, preceding such a move with a ban on physical punishment at home too might not necessarily lead to increased cases of juvenile delinquency

For the justice system to win approval from the general population, it must not only work effectively but also be seen to work. Whenever any doubts are cast over impartiality, the image of the system becomes dented and it will require a considerable amount of time and energy to repair the damage. The extent to which the juvenile justice system in Sweden can accord same treatment to the multi ethnic population remains a challenge that only social workers know far too well. In retrospect, the image of the criminal justice system in Kenya is one of corrupt and understaffed justice workers for which the population is slowly losing faith in.

This report has also examined the cause of the high number of youths with a foreign background in young offenders' institutions in Sweden. I have argued that it is admissible though regrettable that when societies experience a massive influx of foreigners, a lot of social problems are likely to be experienced least among them the problem of crime. It should be noted that there were a lot of problems (among them criminality) with Finns migrating to Sweden and also Swedes migrating to the United States in earlier decades. Control theory does to an extent explain deviance among immigrants. These were youths previously used to direct control by their parents but upon coming to Sweden and experiencing relative freedom appear to reverse the roles of control. When this happens, the parent may be tough on them by applying harsh or inconsistent discipline. This is especially the case when children used to physical discipline come to Sweden to realize that corporal punishment is outlawed. Apart from parents losing control, societal disorganization brought about by loosening of the extended family networks and abandoning of norm, culture and religion contribute to criminality. Integration of immigrants by ensuring they are not living in segregated neighbourhoods, attending schools for 'immigrants', finding it hard to get jobs and failing to access recreation facilities were identified as crime prevention strategies.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a lot of emphasis placed on evidence based practice within the human development professions. Social workers working in the area of juvenile prevention cannot afford to be left behind in this regard.

Most of those interviewed did not know of any existing research in their area of practice. Although most of those interviewed acknowledge that the programs are relatively new, the need for research cannot be overemphasized. There is a tendency to copy programs from other countries and trying to replicate them as they are, this cannot work unless it is backed up by research to determine the extent to which they are implementable. Punishment is perceived by the social workers as not having a stake in enforcing conformity and compliance to social order in today's world albeit necessary for those beyond help and for the safety of the greater majority. Rehabilitation in its minimal form is not promising either, just like working with partnerships is emerging as a viable way of solving the problem of crime, combining methods like mediation, community service, therapeutic programs for victims, treatment for drug problems could hold the cue to safer societies. Ultimately, focusing on young offenders remains the best possible way of eventually riding society of the problem of crime. The realization that adult criminals find themselves entangled into a complex web of criminality when it is too late to reform should be the guiding principle in all efforts geared to saving the young.

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## **Web Resources**

[http://www.scb.se/statistik/\\_publikationer/LE0202\\_2006A01\\_BR\\_X10ST0602.pdf](http://www.scb.se/statistik/_publikationer/LE0202_2006A01_BR_X10ST0602.pdf)

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[http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=281&language=en\\_US](http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=281&language=en_US) Retrieved on 20th May 2008

[http://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/documents/742\\_jj\\_ngorep\\_kenya.htm](http://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/documents/742_jj_ngorep_kenya.htm)  
Retrieved on 20.5. 2008

<http://www.unicef.org/pon97/p56a.htm> Accessed on 10th May 2008

## APPENDIX 1: RESPONDENTS GALLERY

### **Social worker 1 (SW1)**

Age: 44 yrs old

Sex: Male

Ethnicity: Foreign

Education/Training: Bachelor Degree in Commerce and Law, Training in Teaching and Mediation

Job Title: Mediator/Social worker

No. of years working with Juvenile Offenders: 10 years

### **Social worker 2 (SW2)**

Age: 50 yrs old

Sex: Female

Ethnicity: Swedish

Education/Training: Bachelor Degree in Social Work

Job Title: Social worker

No. of years working with Juvenile Offenders: 24 years

### **Social worker 3 (SW3)**

Age: 36 yrs old

Sex: Female

Ethnicity: Foreign

Education/Training: Bachelor Degree in Social Work, Masters in International Relations

Job Title: Social worker

No. of years working with Juvenile Offenders: 11 years

### **Social worker 4 (SW4)**

Age: 55 yrs old

Sex: Male

Ethnicity: Swedish

Education/Training: Bachelor Degree in Social work

Job Title: Social worker

No. of years working with Juvenile Offenders: 10 years

### **Social worker 5 (SW5)**

Age: 48 yrs old

Sex: Male

Ethnicity: Foreign

Education/Training: Bachelor Degree in Informatics

Job Title: Social worker

No. of years working with Juvenile Offenders: 4 years

### **Social worker 6 (SW6)**

Age: 47 yrs old

Sex: Female

Ethnicity: Swedish

Education/Training: Bachelor Degree and Masters Degree in Social Work

Job Title: School Social worker

No. of years working with Juvenile Offenders: 19 years

## APPENDIX 2: INFORMED CONSENT

The following is a presentation of how we will use the data collected in the interview.

The research project is a part of our education in the International Masters program in Social Work at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. In order to insure that our project meets the ethical requirements for good research we promise to adhere to the following principles:

- Interviewees in the project will be given information about the purpose of the project.
- Interviewees have the right to decide whether he or she will participate in the project, even after the interview has been concluded.
- The collected data will be handled confidentially and will be kept in such a way that no unauthorized person can view or access it.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for us to document what is said during the interview and also helps us in the continuing work with the project. In our analyze some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized. After finishing the project the data will be destroyed. The data we collect will only be used in this project.

You have the right to decline answering any questions, or terminate the interview without giving an explanation.

You are welcome to contact me or my supervisor in case you have any questions.

Student name & e-mail

Ndichu Eric

[ewanjamah@yahoo.com](mailto:ewanjamah@yahoo.com)

[torbjorn.forkby@socwork.gu.se](mailto:torbjorn.forkby@socwork.gu.se)

Supervisor name & e-mail

Törbjorn Forkby





### **APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. You work in the area of juvenile crime prevention; please describe to me how you do this?
2. How did this kind of intervention start?
3. Is your work supported by research? What research do you refer to in that case?
4. Do you evaluate the impact of your work? If so, How?
5. Do you partner with other organizations? If so, which ones, in which areas and how?
6. What would you are the most important things juvenile crime prevention?
7. What in your view are the risks that predispose young people to criminality?
8. Boys commit more crimes than girls, in your opinion, what would you attribute this to?
9. Are there differences in crime prevention approaches for boys and girls?
10. Young people learn delinquency from peers they associate with, what could be done to prevent this and are you aware of crime prevention programs that help young people to develop into pro-social adults?
11. It is claimed that people who undergo trauma in their formative years are likely to commit crime. Drawing from your experiences, how true is this claim.
12. There is a link between drug abuse and criminality. What would you say is the relationship between the two as concerns youths in Sweden?
13. Do you think attachment to parents can influence criminality? Are there crime prevention strategies that seek to remedy this situation?
14. Schools are an important Arena for crime prevention work since all children go to school. What are some of the school based crime prevention strategies that you are aware of?
15. What in your view is the role of religion based morality as a way of imposing social control and consequently crime prevention?
16. Studies show income gaps are widening in Sweden. Do you think this could motivate young people to commit crime, if the gap between poor and the rich continue to widen?

17. Do you think there is conflict between youths living in the upper class and those in the lower class? Are there crime prevention strategies that seek to reduce inequalities among youths?
18. To what extent do you feel individual self control for a youth would prevent them from law breaking? Are there prevention programs aimed at instilling high self control?
19. Young people from foreign ethnic background tend to lose the social norms of their culture and take new ones. Do you think the loosening of the extended family networks, cultural rejection and religious abandonment could motivate a young person to commit crime?
20. Do you think stigma associated with imposition of a deviant label e.g a court appearance spoils identity and projects the young person into a deviant career? What are some other labels that may be imposed on young offenders? How can justice workers intervene without labeling? Are there examples of crime prevention programs that seek to avoid labeling?
21. Is there a particular group of youngsters that are likely to offend? What in your opinion is the reason for high rate of offending among immigrant youths?
22. In your view, what best describes youth criminality among immigrants?  
And why?
  - a) Police are more vigilante in their residential areas
  - b) Immigrants occupy crime prone areas because it's cheaper
  - c) They feel segregated and don't have jobs
  - d) Most of them come from societies with strong social controls and especially religion based morality and when they come here, this loosens and leads to a moral vacuum.
  - e) Other explanation
23. What are the typical offences that young people commit?
24. In your view, are there enough efforts on the part of the authorities to reduce opportunities for youths to commit crimes?
25. Do you think punishment can be deterrence to criminality?
26. What is your opinion about the extent to which young offenders institutions (like Fagared) can succeed in preventing recidivism?
27. Is there an emerging trend in youth criminality in Sweden?

28. In your opinion, is the juvenile justice system in Sweden working?
29. What need to be done to improve juvenile justice?
30. Sweden is known for its generous social welfare policies. What are some of the social policies geared towards crime prevention? What more need to be done?